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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA, SOMALIA, AMISOM, AND THE WAY FORWARD

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (S/NF) Summary. Embassy Addis Ababa avails itself of the opportunity to provide our analysis of the current situation in Somalia, particularly as it relates to Ethiopia and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and suggest options for the United States on a way forward. As conditions currently stand, there are no indications that the Ethiopian government intends to intervene militarily should the Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) fall. Prime Minister Meles believes that the fate of the TFG rests with the international community. However, the recent fighting in Mogadishu demonstrated that the African Union (AU) has no contingency plans in the event an evacuation of AMISOM is required. Recognizing that providing direct military support to the TFG raises the stakes in Somalia, and if Washington wants to continue pursuing this policy, we encourage Washington to expand support to the TFG to enable it be able to provide governance and services to the Somali people to enhance its legitimacy within Somalia. We believe establishing the legitimacy of the TFG is critical if it is to survive, and military support alone will not be sufficient to make this happen. End Summary.

Ethiopia Unlikely to Intervene

¶2. (S/NF) There are no indications that Ethiopia will intervene in Somalia now, or if the TFG falls. The Ethiopians want to see the TFG succeed, but they have no faith that it will do so barring significant assistance from the international community, far more assistance than is currently being given. The Ethiopians are not concerned with Somali infighting, but they would be concerned with the emergence of a unified Somalia that is hostile to Ethiopia (a decidedly unlikely prospect for the near term). Ethiopia's plan is to support proxies along their border areas like the Rahanweyn Resistance Army and al Sunnah Wal Jammah. Ethiopian troops in small numbers probably will move in and out of Somalia along the border areas to collect intelligence and to support their proxies, but there are no indications that any large-scale military incursion is in the offing. Prime Minister Meles told the UN Security Council on May 16 that the current level of fighting in Somalia was at an acceptable level and he did not see the emergence of a unified threat to Ethiopia any time soon as occurred in 2005 with the rise of the Islamic Courts.

Contingency Planning for AMISOM Needed

¶3. (S/NF) The May crisis demonstrated that the AU has no

contingency plans should AMISOM be compelled to leave Mogadishu, and we anticipate that if evacuation is needed the AU will ask Washington for rescue. The AU leadership is unwilling seriously to consider contingency planning because it might be perceived by the donors as a lack of intestinal fortitude on the part of the AU, and prompt the donors to cease support. The AU leadership is conflating the international community's concerns of the stability of the TFG with a perceived lack of confidence in AMISOM. As a result, AU leaders are unwilling to be seen admitting publicly that the TFG may fail. However in private, they have expressed to us strong concerns that the TFG may falter and that the AU would be blamed.

¶4. (S/NF) We judge that the most likely scenario for an AMISOM evacuation is that a TFG collapse would leave the peacekeepers in Mogadishu without a government to support. We think it is likely that if Mogadishu falls, the extremists would give AMISOM a fixed time period to leave, presumably without their vehicles and weapons. The idea that the entire force would be over-run seems unlikely, although AMISOM's current configuration on the ground exposes a part of the force to assault more than others. In particular, the Burundi contingent garrisoned at the Siad Barre Military Academy is in the most danger of being cut off from the port and airfield should conditions in Mogadishu deteriorate further. We continue to urge the AU to consider redeploying its forces into a more defensible position.

Suggestions for the Way Forward

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¶5. (S/NF) We recognize that there are no good options for a way forward in Somalia given the circumstances. Nevertheless, it is our view that while military support to the TFG may get the government through the current crisis, it commits the United States to backing overtly and militarily a paper government that is not yet seen as legitimate by the Somali people, and raises U.S. involvement in the morass of a Somali civil war in the name of counterterrorism. As Ethiopia and Embassy Addis Ababa most certainly will be impacted by this course of action, we strongly encourage Washington to review this policy carefully. If Washington is committed to pursuing this policy, we caution that military support and support for AMISOM is not enough to change the situation on the ground in Somalia. For the TFG to become acceptable and legitimate in the eyes of the majority of Somalis, the TFG must begin to govern and provide basic services to the people. As U.S. military doctrine teaches, establishing the legitimacy of the national government is fundamental to defeating an insurgency such as al-Shabaab. The TFG needs resources, support, and strong prodding to move in this direction, and if we wait for the international community to fill this gap, it probably will be too late.

¶6. (S/NF) Continued commitment to the TFG should include the following elements. Some of these elements are being pursued, but we believe that there is considerable room for increased coordination and intensification of efforts:

--Direct conditioned support to the TFG to build capacity in the civil and security sectors.

--Explicit insistence, backed by financial assistance and conditionalities that the TFG get on with governance and service delivery.

--A regional diplomatic approach that seeks alignment of regional activities (particularly Ethiopia and Eritrea) with that of the international community.

--Continued support to AMISOM and contingency planning to prepare for the possibility that the force may have to depart Mogadishu quickly in a worst case scenario.

--A coordinated public diplomacy campaign that helps highlight the service delivery of the TFG, and

--Provision of continued humanitarian and development assistance.

17. (S/NF) As we all recognize that there is a significant risk that the TFG may not survive in the coming weeks or months, we encourage Washington to implement additional steps that would still work in support of the TFG, but also ensure that core U.S. interests are protected. These steps would include:

--A regional diplomatic approach that is focused on facilitating coordination among the "front-line" governments to work together against a common threat.

--Increased support to Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, and Yemen to amplify their counterterrorism capabilities.

--A substantial increase in political, technical, development, and CT support to Somaliland and Puntland who need capacity to control their own territories and fight against extremism and piracy.

--Increased intelligence collection on Somalia political and security developments, and

--A comprehensive strategy to target high value targets, their finances, movements, and weapons acquisition that includes guidelines for kinetic strikes that minimizes the potential for military action to undermine broader U.S. engagement efforts.

YAMAMOTO